

Parliament in War

WHY MR. ASQUITH IS CONTENT TO CONTROL THE HOUSE OF COMMONS AND WHY THE NATION CRIES OUT IN VAIN FOR NATIONAL LEADERSHIP.

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It is curious how little change in the Parliamentary atmosphere the reconstruction of the Ministry has made. If we knew much of what goes in Cabinet meetings we should discover, I suspect, little change there also. In both Mr. Asquith is still the dominant figure. The House of Commons is just as much subject to his will as if Mr. Bonar Law and Mr. Balfour did not exist, or had no place in the Government. The impression on the public is much the same.

Leadership in the Lords.

In the House of Lords the position is different, because Lord Lansdowne there divides with Lord Crewe the representation of the Government, and if he strips Lord Crewe of his official authority not much authority of any other kind remains to him. He is an amiable personality and not much more. But Lord Lansdowne is a man of vast experience; of proved judgment; to whom the House of Lords listened with deference when he spoke for the Unionist party only. The Unionist majority in the Lords nevertheless broke away even from Lord Lansdowne when Mr. Asquith's Ministry flung the Naval and Military Pensions Bill at the Upper Chamber in the old peremptory fashion; leaving no sufficient time for the discussion of a complicated measure before the adjournment. But this was a case by itself, or rather the circumstances were such that the brute despotism of the Parliament Act had no chance to make itself felt. Of its old legislative independence the House of Lords still retains something.

For many purposes the divisions of party have survived the Coalition, both in the Lords and Commons. For one thing, the debating power of the Unionist Peers is far greater than that of the Liberals. It is in proportion, and in more than due proportion, to the Unionist superiority in numbers. The new Lord Chancellor, now known as Lord Buckmaster, is thus far, for all political purposes, a cipher. As an orator in the House of Commons he has the gift of exasperating that body. He was never persuasive and seldom convincing. The gift is one which, in the position he now fills, may well be left to slumber.

Two Ex-Lord Chancellors.

His predecessor, Lord Haldane, with all his various powers of mind, never managed to win the good will of the Chamber over which he presided. Among his powers of mind was a certain shiftness which impaired the influence of very unusual intellectual qualities. He was never quite trusted while he spoke for his Liberal colleagues. Lord Morley, in whose sincerity even his opponents believed, has almost, at the same moment from the Cabinet and from public life because he could not resolve for war. Not a word has he since uttered, either in Parliament or on the platform; and he does not write for the newspapers. In which respect he differs altogether from Lord Curzon and Lord Cromer, who overflow in the Press almost daily by day. Lord Haldane, who will be ninety in September, is amusing his leisure by codifying the Law of England; a colossal task, which all the younger men will likely leave to this veteran; by far the greatest of recent Lord Chancellors; and perhaps the greatest within the memory of lawyers still living.

I do not go on with the list, because, after all, and in all circumstances, and never so much as now, the House of Commons is the central power of the State. I say never so much as now, meaning that under Mr. Asquith's Parliament Act the Second Chamber, as it used to be called, has become not only the First Chamber, but when great affairs are at issue a Single Chamber. The Lords preserve the spirit of independence, but not very much of their old power. Their immense Conservative majority has been turned, however, to no use.

The Lords and Mr. Asquith.

It has never that I know of been directly asserted, but it is quite conceivable that when Mr. Asquith gathered Unionist colleagues into his fold it was with some thought of the Lords.

FOR on all but the very greatest questions the Lords could still give him much trouble in getting his bills through that body. Mr. Asquith's sense of political strategy is acute, and it would be like him to bring the Lords into line and under his sway by impounding their leaders in his Ministry. Until the other day his scheme, if it really was his scheme, answered very well. The refusal to pass the Pensions Bill was their first act of independence since the war began. Patriotism quieted that spirit as it quieted many others.

Ministers Who Count.

The colleagues of the Prime Minister in the House of Commons who really count are all Liberals; all members of his old Ministry; all party men. They are Sir Edward Grey, Foreign Minister; Mr. Lloyd George, Minister of Munitions, and Mr. McKenna as Chancellor of the Exchequer. I was wrong when I spoke of Mr. McKenna as merely a caretaker at the Exchequer. He has proved himself a capable Minister of Finance, and his speech on moving the War Loan Bill won him the confidence of the House and the City, and a view. His dreary failure as Home Secretary is already almost forgotten.

It is not nor is ever likely to be a homogeneous Government. It is a Coalition; not a Union; and on neither side the spirit of party been exercised; and to Union the spirit of party is fatal.

Unionist Ministers.

Besides the three Ministers whom I named above as Ministers who really count, there are others whose devotion and capacity are beyond question. I am speaking only of Ministers who were in the late Government also, and are members of the House of Commons. But such Unionists as Mr. Balfour, Mr. Bonar Law, Mr. Austen Chamberlain, all leaders in their own party, do they really count in the present Cabinet? And when it comes to deciding on a great issue, do anybody really count except the Prime Minister? I ask the question. I leave it to others to answer. But let us look at what has happened this week in the House of Commons.

Mr. Asquith's Autocracy.

Sir Arthur Markham on Wednesday asked whether it is really necessary to have three sets of Whips, seeing that the House of Commons would do exactly what the Prime Minister wants it to do. Mr. Asquith answered modestly that he feared this was an unduly sanguine view. But it is not. It is the literal truth, and yesterday proved it over again for the hundredth time. Mr. Asquith carried without a division his proposal for a six weeks' adjournment, till September 14.

Vain Protest Against It.

The feeling against it was strong on both sides. Sir Henry Dalziel, an extreme Radical, was at one with Sir Henry Craik, a Scottish and scholarly Unionist. One moved and the other supported an amendment limiting the duration of the proposed adjournment. They would have done better to attack the idea of adjourning. They gave abundant reason of national welfare why Parliament ought to be continuously in session at such a crisis as this. Mr. Handel Booth, a Red Radical, and Mr. Amery, a fighting Conservative, pressed the point in much the same spirit. Captain Scott, once in the Liberal Government, and Mr. Wedgwood, once a leader of the Back Bench faction, agreed in demanding a Ministerial declaration on compulsory service. They had both lately from the trenches. They agreed that at any moment action by Parliament might be vital to the safety of the Kingdom.

Plainly the House was impressed by these statements. Plainly it recognized the danger. But of all danger or possible need of action by Parliament during this period of danger the Prime Minister made light. He knew that he had the House in hand. He knew that a majority would vote for whatever he demanded. He rejected every suggestion for amendment; and since even members who moved amendments knew it also, Mr. Asquith in the end carried his motion without a division. Not a vote was recorded against him. The House bent to his will, and till the 14th of September the Government has a free hand, and is free from the criticism it deserves.

Could there be a more crushing proof of the Prime Minister's ascendancy? His ascendancy is an autocracy. He would assert it as he asserts it over Parliament, no more could be asked; provided it was done for a different end. But he chooses that his leadership should begin and end with Parliament. That the present Ministry as a whole is patriotic, devoted, perfectly loyal, is certain. It is, however, equally certain that it still needs an infusion of strength; of strong men; of men with the gift of leadership other than Parliamentary, and capacity for business. If there are no such men in Parliament there are many such outside of Parliament. But I suppose it is hopeless to expect a reinforcement from beyond the sacred precincts of St. Stephen's.

SOEY THROUGS HUNTS SHOW

Biggest Horse Exhibit in Years Draws Southampton Folk.

LAWN MOWER FEAT STAR ATTRACTION

Colonel R. M. Thompson, Decked in Overalls, with Cornstalk Whip, Draws Prize.

(By Telegraph to The Tribune.)

Southampton, N. Y., Aug. 21.—Under a threatening sky the annual Suffolk Hunt Club Horse Show was held this afternoon in the paddock adjoining the clubhouse at Hay Ground. The attendance surpassed all previous shows, and socially it was by far the most successful of any event of the season. From one to four o'clock automobiles filled with men and women in brilliant costumes came from every village and hamlet in the east end of the island. The parking spaces were crowded. Surrounding the paddock blue and yellow pennants were hung to the breeze, and the whole space was inclosed in yellow and white bunting. Tea was served on the porches of the clubhouse.

One of the attractions of the show was Class V, for the best horse drawing a lawn mower, and created much amusement for the spectators. The owners of the entries drove. Colonel Robert M. Thompson, in a suit of overalls, with a cornstalk for a whip, and first prize went to Harry Pelham Robbins, who was dressed as a farmer. Among the other exhibitors in this class were Richard H. Newton and F. B. Wiborg, of Easthampton. Among the early arrivals were Henry E. Cox, with his four-in-hand. With Mr. Cox were Mrs. Henry DeForest and Miss DeForest, Miss S. L. Jennings, Jack Ely, Robert Frank, Jr., and C. J. Cox.

Among the others occupying parking spaces were Mr. and Mrs. W. Scott, Cameron; Mrs. Robert L. Stevens, Mrs. William H. Grinnell, Mrs. E. M. Horne and daughters, the Misses Elsa and Madeleine F. Horne; Ralph J. Preston, with Miss Evelyn Preston, Miss Clara Lee and Kyril Robbitt, Mrs. William Loue Rice, Miss Elise and Miss Mildred Rice, Mr. and Mrs. Orson D. Munn, Mr. and Mrs. Dudley S. Olett, Mr. and Mrs. Rufus L. Patterson and Miss Lucy Patterson. Henry W. DeForest, Mrs. Charles Steele, Mrs. L. T. Hoyt, Mr. and Mrs. Charles Franklin, Mrs. Henry Kirk Porter and Miss A. M. Hegeman, Mr. and Mrs. Rawson L. Wood had in their party Mr. Albert Ely and H. G. Montgomery, Mr. and Mrs. George Rose, of New Orleans. With Dr. and Mrs. Peter B. Wyckoff were Mr. and Mrs. Edmund Coffin. Mrs. Wyckoff wore a gown of midnight blue tulle. Also, Mrs. H. D. Vance, with her son, Harold Vance; Mr. and Mrs. Joseph F. Stillman and the Misses Lida and Louise Stillman. Mr. and Mrs. E. E. 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